

MISSOURI JOBS BY EDUCATION AND SKILL LEVELS

March 2025

Missouri has a wide range of occupations that require various levels of education and skill. This report highlights the employment, job openings, and wages for occupations based on education and skill levels for the projection period of 2022 to 2032. Generally, occupations requiring lower education and skill levels produce the largest number of job opportunities, but occupations requiring higher education and skill levels have faster growth and higher wages.

Jobs by Education Level

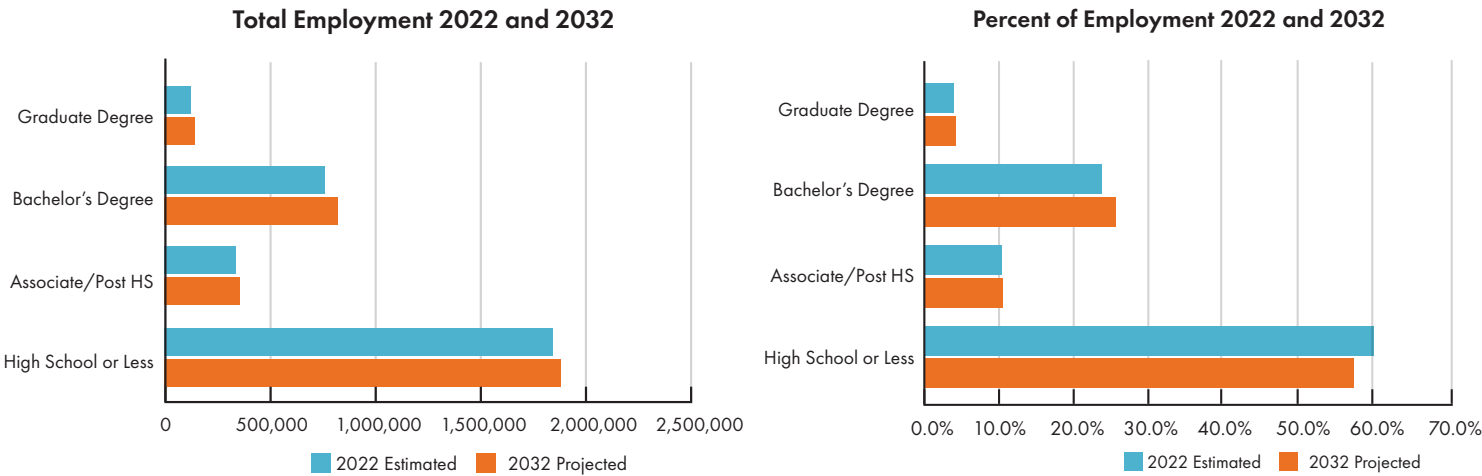
Education categories represent the typical education level most workers need to enter an occupation, as determined by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Education is very important in terms of median wages and the risk of unemployment. Individuals with an education of less than a high school diploma had an average unemployment rate of 5.9 percent versus an unemployment rate of 1.5 percent for those with a bachelor’s degree or higher.

Missouri Unemployment by Education	
Educational Attainment	Unemployment Rate
Less than High School	5.9%
High School Graduate	3.5%
Some College/Associate Degree	2.9%
Bachelor’s Degree or Higher	1.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 1- Year Estimate, Population aged 25-64

Employment by Education Level

Occupations that typically require a high school diploma or less made up the majority of employment in Missouri in 2022. This totals more than 1.8 million jobs, which represents 60.1 percent of total employment in the state. By 2032, the portion of jobs that typically require a high school diploma or less is projected to decline to 58.8 percent. Occupations that typically require a bachelor’s degree represent 24.7 percent of total employment in 2022, with a projected increase to 25.6 percent by 2032.



Annual Openings by Education Level

Total job openings are divided into three categories:

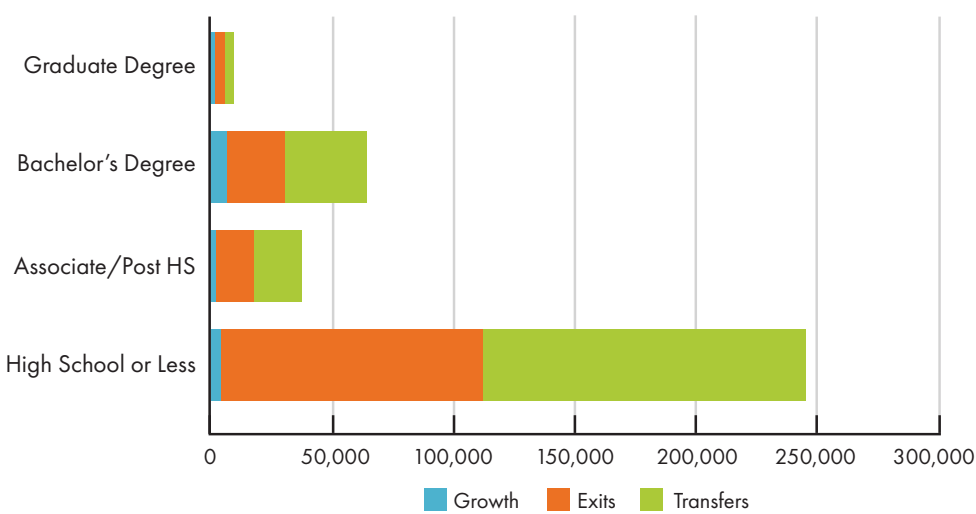
- Growth openings are the result of an occupation growing between the base year and the projected year.
- Exit openings occur when workers leave the workforce entirely.
- Transfer openings occur when workers leave their occupation for a different one.

Across all the education categories, most of the openings are due to transfers, followed by exits and growth. Therefore, there will be a continued need to replace workers that either leave the workforce entirely or move to a different occupation along their career pathway.

There are projected to be more than 357,000 annual total openings between 2022 and 2032. Occupations that typically require a high school diploma or less are projected to account for 68.9 percent of these openings. The large number of openings in occupations requiring lower levels of educational attainment are partly due to the high turnover rate in those occupations. Many individuals in these occupations are just starting their career paths and are more likely to move to other occupations, while individuals in occupations that require higher levels of education are more likely to be further along in their career paths and less likely to leave their jobs.

Occupations that require higher levels of education generally have a greater percentage of their openings coming from growth compared to occupations requiring lower levels of education. Occupations requiring a graduate degree have the highest percentage of their job openings coming from growth (16.4%). Growth opening for occupations that typically require a bachelor's degree only account for 10 percent of total openings. This percentage is even smaller for occupations requiring an associate degree (4.6%) and high school diploma or less (1.6%).

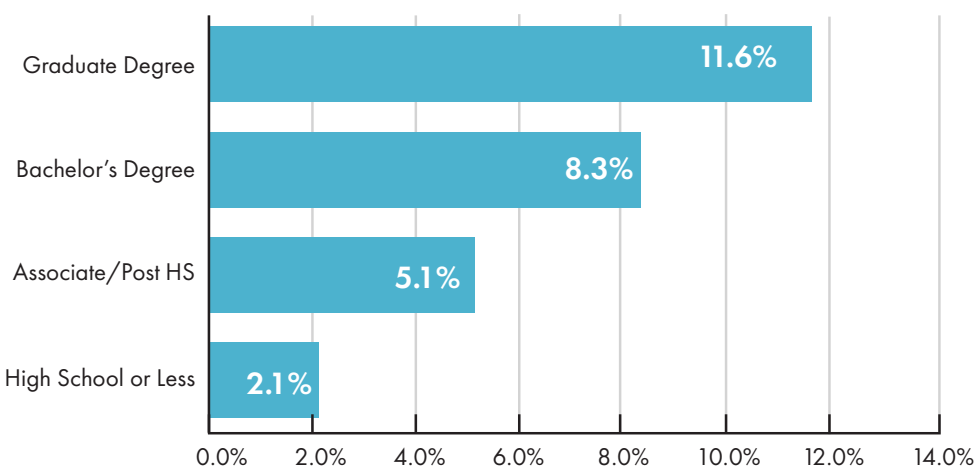
Projected Annual Openings 2022-2032



Growth Rate by Education Level

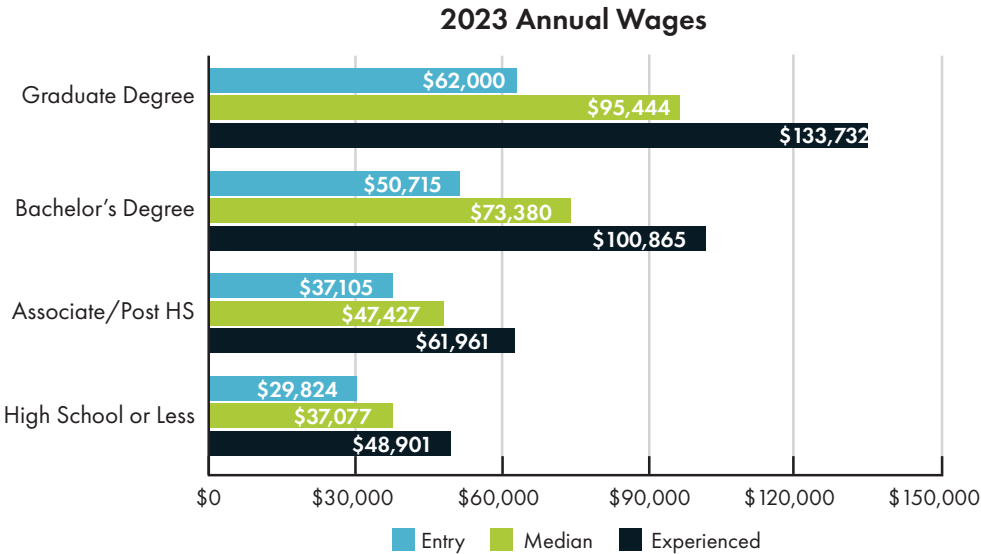
While occupations that typically require a graduate degree have less total employment compared to other education categories, they are projected to experience the fastest growth between 2022 and 2032, with a growth rate of 11.6 percent. This is almost three times the 4.3 percent average growth rate for all occupations in the state. The growth in occupations that typically require a graduate degree is largely fueled by the major occupation groups of *Healthcare Practitioners, Community and Social Service, and Education*.

Projected 2022-2032 Growth Rate



Wages by Education Level

Occupations that require higher education generally earn higher wages. Occupations that typically require a graduate degree earn, as a group, a median annual wage of \$95,444. This is 157 percent higher than the median annual wage of \$37,077 for occupations that typically require a high school diploma or less. Occupations that typically require a bachelor's degree earn a median annual wage of \$73,380, which is nearly double the median annual wage for occupations that typically require a high school diploma or less.



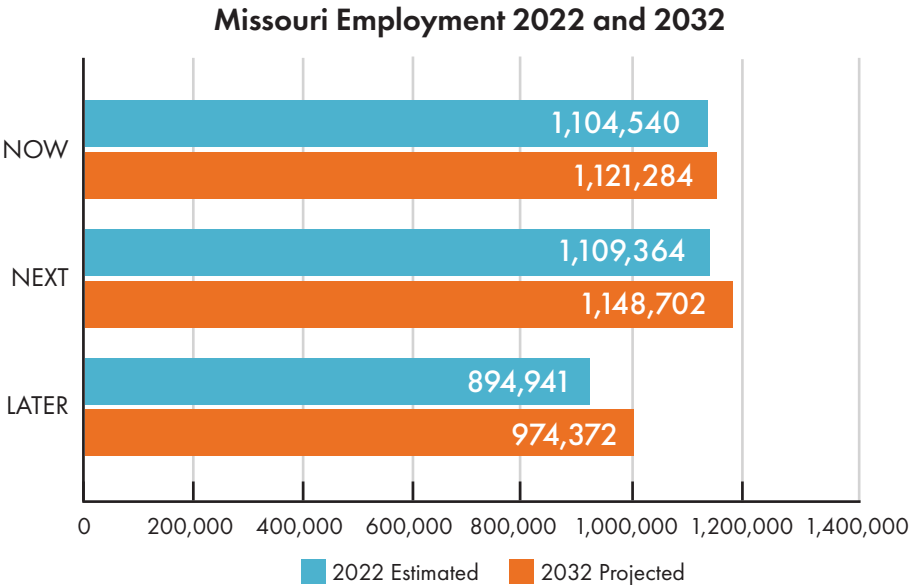
As workers progress in their careers and earn experienced wages, the differences in wages by typical education required become even greater. Occupations that require a graduate degree earn experienced-level wages that are 174 percent higher than experienced-level wages for occupations requiring a high school diploma or less, while occupations requiring a bachelor's degree earn more than twice than occupations requiring a high school diploma or less.

Jobs by Skill Level

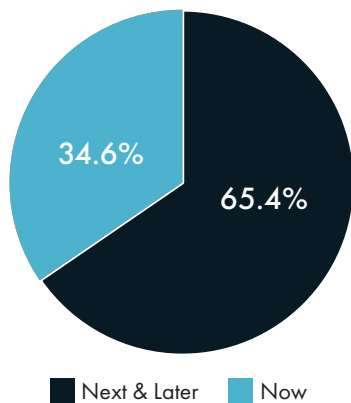
Beyond educational attainment alone, occupations can be classified into NOW, NEXT, and LATER categories based on the preparation and skills often required to enter an occupation. NOW occupations require the least amount of preparation, with a typical educational requirement of a high school diploma or less, no experience, on-the-job training of less than one month, and little vocational preparation. NEXT occupations typically require moderate levels of training or experience. Occupations at the higher end of the NEXT category require extensive experience, apprenticeships, non-degree certificates, or associate degrees. LATER occupations require the most amount of preparation, with a bachelor's degree typically required for entry.

Employment by Skill Level

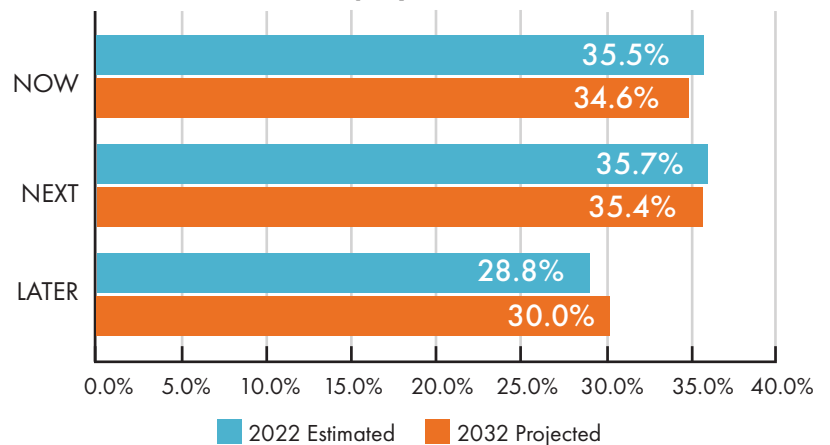
Among the NOW, NEXT, and LATER categories, the NEXT category has the most employment at more than 1.1 millions jobs in 2022. This represents 35.7 percent of total employment in 2022. By 2032, this percentage is projected to drop slightly to 35.4 percent. NOW occupations have the second highest employment, with over 1 million jobs and 35.5 percent of the total employment in 2022. LATER occupations had the lowest employment in 2022 but are projected to have the greatest increase in share of total employment, going from 28.8 percent in 2022 to 30.0 percent in 2032. Per long-term projections, 65.4 percent of jobs in Missouri will require education beyond high school by 2032 and will at least require moderate to long-term training or experience.



Missouri Employment by Skill Level, 2032



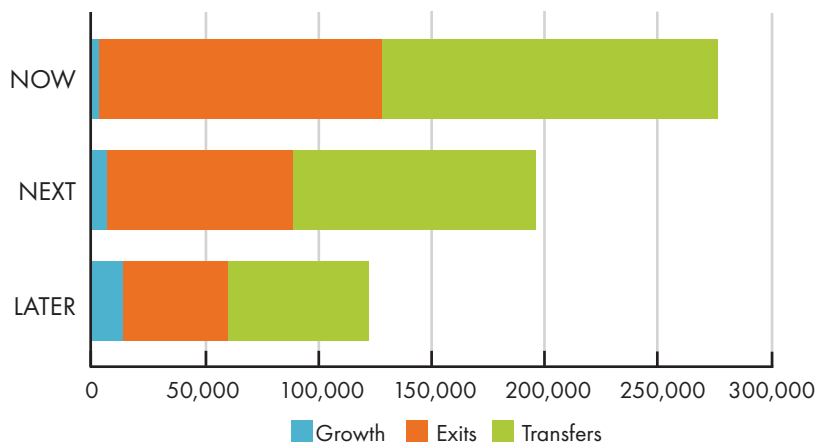
Percent of Employment 2022 and 2032



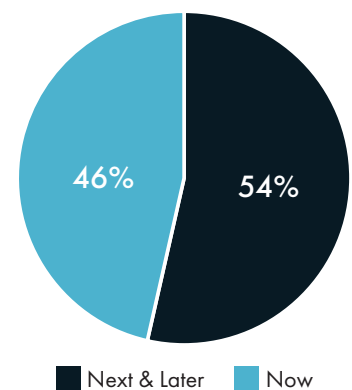
Annual Openings by Skill Level

There are projected to be over 357,000 total job openings annually between 2022 and 2032. NOW occupations are projected to account for 46.1 percent of these openings. Out of over 164,000 total annual openings for NOW occupations, 1 percent are from actual new job growth. LATER occupations are projected to have 10.9 percent of their openings coming from new job growth. Across all three skill levels, the majority of the openings are transfer openings. Most (54%) annual openings between 2022 and 2032 will require education beyond high school and at least moderate to long-term training or experience.

Projected Annual Openings 2022-2032



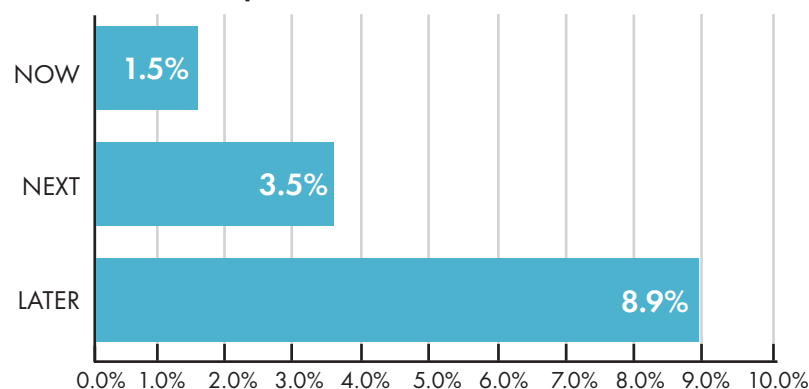
Annual Openings by Skill Level 2022-2032



Growth Rate

LATER occupations are projected to have the highest growth rate at 8.9 percent. In comparison, the average growth rate for all occupations in the state is 4.3 percent. The major occupational groups of *Healthcare Practitioners, Computer and Mathematical, Management, and Life, Physical and Social Science Occupations* are projected to contribute the most to the LATER occupations' growth rate.

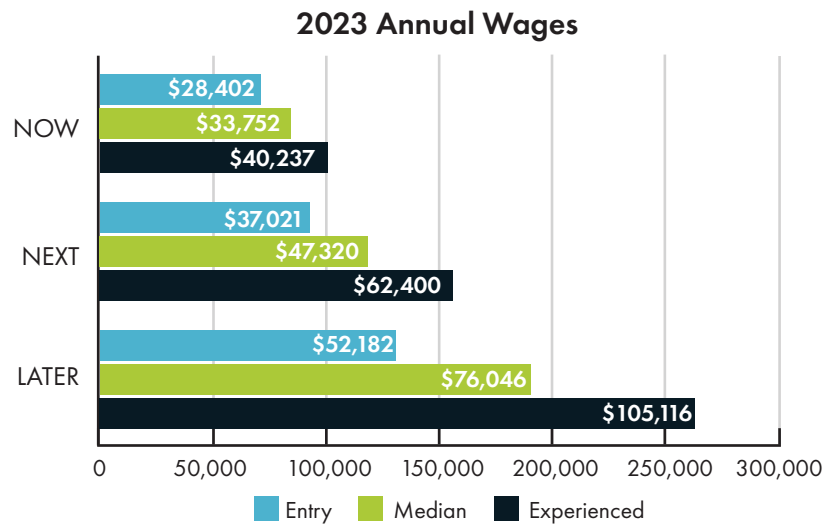
Projected Growth Rate 2022-2032



Wages

LATER occupations earn the highest wages, with a median annual wage of \$76,046. This is 125 percent higher than the median annual wage for NOW occupations (\$33,752) and 61 percent higher than the median wage for NEXT occupations (\$47,320). Average entry-level wages for LATER occupations are 84 percent higher than entry level wages for NOW occupations and 41 percent higher than the entry level wages for NEXT occupations.

The difference in wages between skill levels is even greater when comparing experienced-level wages. The average experienced-level wages for LATER occupations (\$105,116) is 161 percent higher than the experienced-level wage for NOW occupations (\$40,237) and 69 percent higher than the experienced-level wage for NEXT occupations (\$62,400).



Conclusion

Occupations that require higher levels of education and skill generally have higher wages and faster projected growth, while occupations that require lower education or skill levels have a greater number of job openings. Even though occupations that require lower levels of education and skill are not expected to have high growth rates, the high turnover rate in these occupations ensures many job openings during the projection period. High demand for lower education and skill occupations is common across several states and national economies. These jobs can be the entry point for higher skill jobs, such as NEXT or LATER occupations, that offer higher wages.

Data Sources:

- U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.
- Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC), 2022-2032 Occupational Employment Projections for employment, openings, and growth rate data.
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) for wage data.

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